Frequently Asked Questions

Where do we meet the first day? We will meet at the Los Alamos Research Park (4200 Casa Grande Dr., Los Alamos, NM 87544) Suite 300 at 8:00 on the first day.

What is the dress code? Students dress casually at LANL, particularly during the summer. Shorts and T-shirts are fine, but business attire is suggested when giving presentations. When working in the labs, expect to wear closed-toe shoes (no flip-flops). It is not O.K. to go bare foot while on site at the summer school.

What will the weather be like? Los Alamos is located at approx. 7200 ft elevation. Mornings are bright and sunny, but, toward the end of June, it may cloud up almost every afternoon with local thunderstorms, as is typical throughout the Rocky Mountains. High temperatures are typically in the mid 80's. It does get cool with temperatures as low as the high 50's in the evening, particularly after a rainstorm. (**http://www.weather.lanl.gov/**)

Why is the summer school just nine weeks long? The duration of the summer school is limited by the funding provided to pay for the students' and mentors' time. The schedule of June through the beginning of August is based on a compromise between schools that are on a semester system, which typically get out at the middle - end of May, and schools that are on a quarter systems that tend to get out later in June. Note: In 2009 we extended the summer school from 8 weeks to 9 weeks.

How much will I be paid? You will receive a fellowship that is comparable to regular undergraduate or graduate summer hires' pay and includes funds for travel to and from Los Alamos. The fellowships depend on the amount of school completed upon arrival at the summer school and the distance you are traveling. Pay rates for undergraduates and grad students (make sure you look at Technical Series) are summarized at: (**http://www.lanl.gov/education/undergrad/salary.shtml**)

What about housing? Housing during the summer is always an issue because the Laboratory hires more than 1000 students during the summer. It cannot be emphasized enough that it is important to take care of housing as early as possible. We recommend that students set up a Facebook group or other similar group to coordinate housing arrangements and social events throughout the summer. We will let you know of any opportunities we are aware of.

How long is the workday? Typically, the workday will begin at 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM. The mentors will make arrangements to keep the facilities open longer if students feel they need additional time to work on their projects. A mentor must be present to work in the labs after 5:00 PM.

What is a typical workday?

- 8:00 to 9:30 each morning you will be in a week-long tutorial (e.g. signal processing).
  The rest of the day, you will be working as a team of 2-3 students on a research project.
- 3:30-5:00 Tuesday and Thursday afternoons are set aside for guest lectures discussing various dynamics and cyber-physical systems research topics.
- Additionally, during the second and third week of the summer school, you will have a mini-project to work on.
- Various tours will be arranged throughout the summer.

What computer resources will be available during the summer school? Each student will have a desktop computer with access to needed software and the Internet. In addition, each project group will have a laptop or desktop computer for data acquisition that runs LabVIEW or other data acquisition software and to run other software needed for their specific project (e.g. finite element software). Some software with restrictive or expensive licensing will only be available on a few shared computers.

What project will I be assigned to? We will send out descriptions of the projects in mid-March and allow you to rank them based on your level of interest. We will then assign people to the projects based on these rankings. In the past, everyone who has responded by the deadline has been able to get his or her 1st or 2nd ranked project. However, if too many people choose the same projects, then we may be required to assign people to one of their lower-ranked selections. By April 14th we will notify students by e-mail regarding the project they will work on, who their mentor will be, and also provide some background reading material. Please note that in contrast to lab projects you have been engaged in during your undergraduate curriculum, these projects generally don't have a "known" outcome and as such are much more representative of a research project that a graduate student would be involved with.

Do I need a car? A car is not necessary, but may make getting around a bit easier (see advice from previous students). There are many interesting places to visit around New Mexico that require a car, as public transportation is very limited outside of Los Alamos. The summer school site is located 2-3 miles from most student housing locations. There is a free bus service that will take students from town to the summer school, http://www.losalamosnm.us/transit/Pages/RoutesandSchedules.aspx but it is limited and does not run on the weekend. Generally, students have been very good about car-pooling and giving rides to those without a car.

What is unique about this summer school? Some of the unique aspects of this program include projects with a hands-on component, lectures provided by world-renowned experts in various fields of dynamics and cyber-physical systems and the access students have to these experts after their lectures, field trips to unique and restricted facilities at Los Alamos National Laboratory, and development and presentation of a paper at an international professional conference.

What after-hours activities are available? Los Alamos is a very small town with a population of about 14,000 people. The town is surrounded by Santa Fe National Forest and Native American reservations (Pueblos). There is an abundance of outdoor activities that can be done locally, including backpacking, hiking, mountain biking, golf, rock climbing, and swimming at the highest altitude Olympic size swimming pool in the US. Santa Fe is about 35 miles away and is a big tourist attraction with many renowned restaurants, festivals, and nightlife.
See http://visit.losalamos.com, http://www.santafechamber.com/.

The advice from previous students also suggests lots of after-hours activities.